

Message Text

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TAGS:

SUBJECT: VESCO CASE: JACKSON'S STATEMENT

BEGIN QUOTE:

FOLLOWING IS THE STATEMENT BY SENATOR HENRY M. JACKSON (D-WASH.), CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE PERMANENT SUBCOMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATIONS AS HE OPENED THE SUBCOMMITTEE'S HEARINGS MONDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1974 ON ALLEGATIONS REGARDING ROBERT VESCO'S INTENDED ACQUISITION OF SEVERAL THOUSAND MACHINE GUNS WITH SILENCERS, AND HIS INTENDED MASS PRODUCTION OF SUCH WEAPONS IN COSTA RICA.

INNER QUOTE:

TODAY'S HEARINGS MARK THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY, ALMOST TO THE DAY, OF THIS SUBCOMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGATIONS INVOLVING ROBERT VESCO. THE ALLEGATIONS BECOME MORE DISTURBING. THE FACTS BECOME MORE CONFUSING. THE MOTIVES BEHIND MR. VESCO'S ACTIVITIES BECOME MORE CRITICAL.

LAST MONTH WE RECEIVED TESTIMONY THAT HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED AUTOMATIC AND SEMI-AUTOMATIC RIFLES AND SHOTGUNS WERE SMUGGLED TO ROBERT VESCO ABOARD A LEAR JET. THE OWNER OF THAT AIRCRAFT, THOMAS P. RICHARDSON, INVOKED HIS PRIVILEGE AGAINST SELF-INCRIMINATION WHEN QUESTIONED BY THIS SUBCOMMITTEE.

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WE WILL HEAR ALLEGATIONS TODAY THAT ROBERT VESCO HAD IN

HIS POSSESSION IN COSTA RICA SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS AND NIGHT VISION DEVICES; THAT ROBERT VESCO, ACTING THROUGH THIRD PARTIES, PLANNED TO ACQUIRE SOME TWO THOUSAND INGRAM M-10 MACHINE GUNS; THAT ROBERT VESCO WAS INTERESTED IN FINANCING A MACHINE GUN FACTORY TO MASS PRODUCE THESE WEAPONS IN COSTA RICA WITH SEVERAL AMERICANS; THAT ROBERT VESCO, AGAIN THROUGH THIRD PARTIES, RECENTLY ACQUIRED A 54-FOOT ALUMINUM YACHT EQUIPPED WITH SOPHISTICATED ELECTRONIC GEAR FOR EXACT PURPOSES UNKNOWN BUT POSSIBLY CONNECTED WITH THE TRANSPORTATION OF WEAPONS AND OTHER CONTRABAND; AND THAT SOME 65,000 DOLLARS TOWARD THE PURCHASE PRICE OF THE YACHT WAS SUPPLIED BY A MAN WHO FLEW IN FROM WASHINGTON AND APPEARED WITH A BRIEF CASE CONTAINING HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS.

THESE NEW ALLEGATIONS REGARDING ROBERT VESCO MUST BE CONSIDERED IN LIGHT OF AN OPEN LETTER TO HIM FROM THE NEW PRESIDENT OF COSTA RICA, THE HONORABLE DANIEL ODUBER. THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE LETTER HAS BEEN VERIFIED BY THE COSTA RICAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON. THE COSTA RICAN AMBASSADOR, THE HONORABLE RUDOLPHO SILVA, HAS PROVIDED ME WITH THE TEXT OF PRESIDENT ODUBER'S LETTER THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF WHICH WILL BE INSERTED IN FULL IN THIS HEARING RECORD. AT THIS TIME I WOULD LIKE TO READ THE FOLLOWING RELEVANT PARAGRAPHS:

"BEFORE ASSUMING MY RESPONSIBILITIES AS PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC AND GIVEN THE BUSINESS RELATIONS YOU HAVE HAD WITH MUTUAL FRIENDS, IT SEEMS FITTING TO LEAVE IN YOUR HANDS THIS LETTER WITH MY IDEAS AS TO WHAT YOUR BUSINESS AND PERSONAL CONDUCT SHOULD BE DURING THE PERIOD IN WHICH I WILL BE CARRYING OUT MY DUTIES AS PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC.

,MANY PROTESTS - WHICH I SHARE - WERE MADE BECAUSE OF YOUR GEETING, THROUGH THE FAULT OF YOUR FRIENDS AND NOT YOUR OWN, DIFFERENT TREATMENT AT THE JUAN SANTAMARIA AIRPORT THAN THAT ACCORDED COSTA RICANS AND FOREIGNERS. THE PRACTICES OF CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION ARE SOUND ONES AND MUST BE UNCLASSIFIED

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OBEYED BY ALL, AS I EXPECT THEM TO BE COMPLIED WITH EVEN BY THE HIGHEST OFFICIALS IN MY GOVERNMENT. NATURALLY, THE SAME WILL APPLY TO PRIVATE PLANES AND THEIR OCCUPANTS. YOU HAVE BEEN ACCUSED OF BRINGING MERCHANDISE INTO THE COUNTRY WHICH HAS NOT PASSED THROUGH CUSTOMS. I TRUST THAT THIS WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN.

"AS I TOLD YOU BEFORE, FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS HAVE KEPT ME INFORMED ABOUT THE CONTROVERSIES CONCERNING COMPANIES THAT YOU TEMPORARILY HEADED, AND OTHERS WHICH YOU STILL HEAD. THERE ARE TWO AREAS IN WHICH THOSE CONTROVERSIES ARE SITUATED. IN THE CRIMINAL AREA THEY MAY RESULT IN A REQUEST FOR EXTRADITION. IT WAS ATTEMPTED ONCE, BUT IN SUCH A WAY THAT IT SEEMED AIMED AT THE EXTRADITION FAILING, JUST AS IT DID. IF THE JUDICIARY POWER COMES TO UPHOLD ANY EXTRADITION REQUEST BASED ON TREATIES, THE LAWS AND THE CONSTITUTION, YOU WILL HAVE TO BE EXTRADITED."

THERE ARE MANY QUESTIONS WHICH, SPEAKING CANDIDLY, WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO ANSWER. ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT, IN MY MIND IS NOW RAISED BY HIS EXCELLENCY, THE PRESIDENT OF COSTA RICA WHO SAYS THAT EXTRADITION HAS BEEN ATTEMPTED ONCE BUT "IN SUCH A FORM THAT IT SEEMED AIMED TOWARD MAKING THE EXTRADITION UNSUCCESSFUL, WHICH IN FACT HAPPENED." DID THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT WISH TO KEEP ROBERT VESCO OUT OF THE COUNTRY FOR SOME REASON? DOES HE HAVE SOME CRUCIAL INFORMATION WHICH HE COULD SUPPLY TO EXPLAIN, IN PART, THE NATIONAL NIGHTMARE WE HAVE JUST LIVED THROUGH?

THE CHARGES OF HALF-HEARTED ATTEMPTS AT ROBERT VESCO'S EXTRADITION HAVE A FAMILIAR RING. WE HAVE TAKEN EXECUTIVE SESSION TESTIMONY REGARDING THE UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT BY THE UNITED STATES TO EXTRADITE ROBERT VESCO FROM THE BAHAMAS. WE LEARNED THAT THE BAHAMIAN LAWYER HIRED BY OUR GOVERNMENT TO HANDLE THE EXTRADITION HAD PREVIOUS TIES TO VESCO ENTITIES AND ASSOCIATES.

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I AM DIRECTING SUBCOMMITTEE STAFF TO REVIEW THE ATTEMPTS MADE BY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT TO EXTRADITE ROBERT VESCO FROM COSTA RICA AND THE BAHAMAS.

FURTHERMORE, I WILL ASK THE STATE DEPARTMENT TO TRANSMIT, THROUGH APPROPRIATE DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS, MY REQUEST TO THE PRESIDENT OF COSTA RICA FOR HIS COOPERATION IN SUPPLYING US WITH ANY AND ALL RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS IN THEIR POSSESSION RELATING TO THE IMPORT AND EXPORT ACTIVITIES OF ROBERT VESCO AND PEOPLE AND COMPANIES CONTROLLED BY HIM.

WE HAVE FOUND CURIOUS AND UNEXPLAINED CONDUCT OF FEDERAL AGENTS WHEN VESCO'S NAME FIRST SURFACED IN AN ALLEGED NARCOTICS SCHEME.

WE HAVE FOUND THAT FEDERAL NARCOTICS AGENTS PERFORMED
PERSONAL SERVICES FOR VESCO -- SWEEPING HIS HOME AND
OFFICE FOR EAVESDROPPING DEVICES.

WE HAVE FOUND THAT LETHAL WEAPONS WERE ILLEGALLY TRANS-
PORTED TO VESCO IN COSTA RICA.

WE HAVE FOUND QUESTIONS RAISED, ABOUT ATTEMPTS TO
EXTRADITE VESCO TO THE UNITED STATES.

OUR FINDINGS ARE NOT COMPLETE. THE LAST CHAPTER IN
THIS STORY IS YET TO BE WRITTEN. INGERSOLL

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